

NORWICH BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS
REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2010
7:00 PM, MARION CROSS SCHOOL

Minutes

Present: Board members Addante, Callaghan, Day, and Odell; Administrators Gersen, Aubin, Kelley; and 7 members of the public. Recorded by C. Edwards.

1. Call to order – Chair Callaghan called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

2. Minutes

Linda Addante moved and Neil Odell seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the public hearing and closed session minutes of January 21, 2010 as amended. The motion passed unanimously. The one change in both sets of minutes was that Board member Geoffrey Vitt was in attendance at both meetings.

3. Communications and Reports

Report of the Chair - Chair Callaghan announced that the next regular Board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 3, at 7:00 PM in the Marion Cross School Library. The Superintendent will chair this organizational meeting until the officers are selected.

Chair Callaghan noted which Board members will discuss the various Warning articles at Norwich's Town Meeting:

Issuance of bonds: Neil Odell

Board members' salaries: Linda Addante

Budget: Geoffrey Vitt and Carey Callaghan

Chair Callaghan invited the public to attend Town Eating Day on Saturday, February 27. At 11 a.m. that morning, the Board and Principal Kelley will be discussing equity in the schools. The chair said it's a very enjoyable, informative event.

Reports of Administrators – Superintendent Gersen had no report except to express his appreciation that the three Board members whose terms are expiring are running for re-election.

John Aubin, Assistant Superintendent for Business, reviewed the auditor's Annual Financial Report for the year ended June 30, 2009, saying the report contained no negative findings. In his overview Mr. Aubin highlighted the balance sheet for all funds for the district and a new required notation indicating the district's liability for retirement benefits of \$187,088 based on current employees. He reported that the negative balance of \$159,587 is due mostly to the drop in fund returns and noted the accounts for food service funds, the solar panel project, and Medicaid monies for special-needs students. Mr. Aubin noted that federal grants that are not used are sent back to the federal government. He concluded his overview by noting that the auditors' summary letter indicated that no deficiencies were found.

In response to a question regarding unspent funds at the end of the year, Mr. Aubin answered that it is used to reduce the tax levy for the next year.

Principal's Report: Dr. Kelley reported that a water pipe burst in the music room Sunday, January 31. Fortunately, Artist-in-Residence Kathy Parsonnet was working in the art room and alerted people; within a half-hour the leak was stopped and cleanup had begun. A Board member asked what was done about preventing mold. John Aubin reported that Plant Director Jonathan Brush had drying fans in place immediately, thus preventing mold growth. Dr. Kelley reported that the school is working toward more meaningful faculty evaluations.

Teachers will finish work on their goals in May then create new goals during the summer.

Also noted: Rick Newton began a collection for Haiti, and will give the money to Children Helping Children, an organization gathering funds at Richmond Middle School. Six eighth graders from the Richmond Middle School will roll the coins with first graders.

The school also took part in a send-off for Hannah Kearney, who's on her way to the Olympics.

Treasurer's Report: Cheryl Lindberg was not present. Her report shows where district monies are invested and what they are earning. In response to a question about the banks' insurance, John Aubin said that because the funds are collateralized, they are quite safe in this market.

4. PTO Report

Donna Mackall reported that a PTO-sponsored skating party was well attended. In another initiative, parents gave money for each child to buy a book, and reported that the PTO acquired many books for the school. A PTO fund-raiser did not draw as much money as was hoped for, so the PTO decided not to give teachers the usual spring grants of \$100. The organization has put together a fund-raising group to look at fund raising alternatives. An author from Alaska will be presenting to the lower grades on February 25. March 26 is the annual spelling bee, and the PTO is hoping for a team from the School Board. The proceeds will go to the Authors program and the town library.

5. Business Requiring Discussion

Communication Plan for 2010-11 Budget - The Board discussed ways to meet with the public to discuss the budget. Superintendent Gersen said he believed the board needed to emphasize the fact that the spending is reduced in the FY11 budget. He noted that in order to control spending at Marion Cross School several staff positions were eliminated and nonunion staff members' salaries were frozen. He also noted that the FY10 budget was 5% lower than that for FY09.

The Board agreed that the Norwich listserv is a good means for getting out the facts about the budget. The Board decided to hold the budget discussion Monday, February 22, in the Marion Cross School Library. The SAU will post the meeting in the *Valley News* and on its Web site. The PTO will relay news of the meeting, preferably with a one-page summary of the budget in the PTO newsletter.

The Board discussed having a table at the Grange Breakfast on the last Saturday in February, and Neil Odell indicated he would contact someone about that.

Norwich Finance Committee member Steve Flanders suggested that the Board talk directly to the fears of residents regarding the tax-rate increase, and remind Norwich residents that the CLA (common level of appraisal) will not rise similarly next year.

5. Business Requiring Action

Linda Addante moved and Anne Day seconded a motion to accept with appreciation the \$800 gift of the Norwich Women's Club to the Authors Fund at the Marion Cross School. The motion passed unanimously.

Linda Addante moved and Anne Day seconded a motion to accept with appreciation the \$3,500 gift from the Milton Frye fund for Experiential Education to fund a FRAGLETS workshop by Kathy Parsonnet. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Executive Session

Linda Addante moved and Neil Odell seconded a motion to enter executive session in accordance with Title 1, Section 313 for discussion of negotiations. The motion passed unanimously. The Board members entered executive session at 8:15 p.m. They returned at 8:43 p.m.

7. Adjournment

Linda Addante moved and Anne Day seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:43 PM.